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CHURCH-ALES.

IN days gone by, one of the most important anniversaries in many of our old country parishes was the 'Church-ale,' a festival which, originally instituted in honour of the church saint, was in after-years frequently kept up for the purpose of contributing towards the repair and decoration of the church. Anyhow, it was by all classes recognised as the gala season of the parish; and from the various accounts and incidental allusions that have been bequeathed to us in connection with it, there can be no doubt that this yearly festival was the occasion of every kind of merry-making coupled with a complete cessation from business.

In the time of Shakspeare, and indeed for a century or two before his day, it appears that the term *ale* was synonymous with festival; and hence its occurrence in such phrases as Leet-ale, Whitsun-ale, Bride-ale, &c., numerous references to which we meet with in the literature of that period. Thus Chaucer uses it in this sense; and Ben Jonson, in his *Masque of Queens*, makes one of the Hags say: 'A piper it got at a church-ale.' Shakspeare also employs the expression in *Pericles*:

It hath been sung at festivals,
On Ember-eves and holy-ales.

As at these festivals, ale seems to have been the predominant liquor, it is highly probable that from this circumstance the term took its origin. On such an occasion, for instance, it was the business of the churchwardens to have specially brewed a considerable quantity of strong ale, which was sold to the visitors; a practice which, it is recorded, led to 'great pecuniary advantage, for the rich thought it a meritorious duty, besides paying for their ale, to offer largely to the church fund.' Hence, it was no uncommon thing in some parishes to have several of these ales in the course of the year, and sometimes one or more parishes would agree to hold annually a certain number of them. As an

illustration of this usage, we may quote the following curious stipulation, preserved in the Bodleian Library: 'The parishioners of Elvaston and Okebrook, in Derbyshire, agree jointly to brew four ales betwixt this (the time of the contract) and the feast of St John Baptist next coming; and that every inhabitant of the said town of Okebrook shall be at the several ales; and every husband and his wife shall pay twopence, and every cottager one penny; and all the inhabitants of Elvaston shall have and receive all the profits and advantages coming of the said ales, to the use and behoof of the said church of Elvaston.'

Unfortunately, however, these festive gatherings were in course of time greatly abused; and we read how even in the body of the church, when the people were assembled together for devotion, they not only turned their attention to diversions, but actually introduced drinking. It is easy to understand how such scenes were received with considerable ill-favour amongst a certain number of persons, and indeed so scandalised the Puritans of the seventeenth century that in many places they were wholly discontinued. Thus Stubbs, in his *Anatomie of Abuses* (1585), speaks in no friendly term of the church-ale; and after describing the usual method of procedure at these times, adds: 'In this kind of practice they continue six weeks, a quarter of a year, yea, half a year together. That money, they say, is to repair their churches and chapels with, to buy books for service, cups for the celebration of the sacrament, and such other necessities. And they maintain other extraordinary charges in their parish besides.' Although, of course, Stubbs has given a somewhat exaggerated account of the case, yet it is evident that the bounds of moderation were only too frequently ignored. An additional cause of complaint, moreover, arose from these church-ales being now and then held on Sunday, as appears from a sermon preached by one William Kethe at Blandford Forum in the year 1570, wherein occurs the following passage: 'Which holyday, the multitude call their revelyng day,

which day is spent in bulbeatings, bearebeatings, dicing, cardyng, daunsynges, drunkenness, &c.'

It must not be supposed, however, that of the many holiday observances which marked the social life of our forefathers, the church-ale was more than any other specially abused, the same fault having been laid to the charge of most of the principal festive anniversaries, many of the observances connected with which have for this very reason long ago fallen into disuse. In the history of the church-ale, it is curious and interesting to note the gradual development of a custom from its original purpose. Thus, as we have already pointed out, whereas this institution was at first intended to be a commemorative rejoicing in honour of the church saint, it was by degrees extended to the holiday festivities connected with such anniversaries as Easter or Whitsuntide, and lastly, was applied to any number of similar festal gatherings which might be summoned in the course of the year by the parish authorities to defray church expenses.

Amongst some of the many well-known church-ales formerly kept up throughout the country, may be mentioned one noticed by Carew in his *Survey of Cornwall*, who has thus described it: 'For the church-ale, two young men of the parish are yearly chosen by their last foregoers to be wardens, who make collection among the parishioners of whatsoever provision it pleaseth them voluntarily to bestow. This they employ in brewing and baking against Whitsuntide, upon which holydays the neighbours meet at the church-house, and there merrily feed on their own victuals. When the feast is ended, the wardens yield in their accounts to the parishioners, and such money as exceedeth the disbursement is laid up to defray any extraordinary charges arising in the parish.' But this custom has long ago vanished, and is numbered now amongst the things of the past. Again, Aubrey in his introduction to the *Natural History of Wiltshire*, tells us that there were no rates for the poor in his grandfather's days, the church-ale of Whitsuntide doing the business. According to his account, 'in every parish was a church-house, to which belonged spits, crooks, and other utensils for dressing provisions. Here the housekeepers met. The young people were there too, and had dancing, bowling, shooting at butts, &c.' The church-ale of Castle-Combe, in the same county, was long kept up with much enthusiasm; and to encourage the celebration of this festival, no one was allowed to brew so long as any of the church-ale remained unsold. According to Britton, the inhabitants met at this annual festival 'to distribute alms to the indigent and to make merry. Near the church was a house furnished with the utensils required for dressing victuals. After a sober entertainment, the younger individuals of the party amused themselves with dancing.' At Tarring, near Worthing, Sussex, the church-ale was yearly kept up without interruption from a very early period till the year 1548, the second

year of the reign of Edward VI. In this year, the parish having lost seven shillings and sixpence by the festival, it was discontinued till the year 1559, when it once more regained its attractions, and was attended with profit.

Hutchinson, in his *History of Northumberland*, informs us that in the northern counties the church-ale was a very popular institution. The manner of holding these festivals, he tells us, was under tents and booths erected in the churchyard, where all kinds of diversions were introduced. Interludes were performed, 'being a species of theatrical performance, consisting of a rehearsal of some passages in Holy Scripture personated by actors.' On these occasions, he further adds, 'great feasts were displayed, and vast abundance of meat and drink.' Once more, the festivities of a church-ale were so intimately associated with the sacred fabric itself, that several pieces of sculpture in Cirencester Church commemorate these merry makings, in which music, too, held an important place. In the porch of Chalk Church, Kent, have been preserved some grotesque figures, illustrating the merry scenes of a church-ale.

That these church-ales were not unattended with expense may be gathered from many of the old churchwardens' accounts. Thus, we read how in the year 1603 the pewter for the church-ale at Minchinhampton cost twenty-six shillings and sixpence; the best pan, twenty-four shillings; the two spits and the pair of racks, twenty shillings and fourpence; the furnace and the other pan, fifty-three shillings and threepence. At Broad Blunsdon, in North Wilts, an old manuscript informs us how on one occasion the church-ale gained four pounds and fourteen shillings profit. In Coates's *History of Reading* (1802), under the churchwardens' accounts of St Mary's parish, we find sundry references to the church-ale expenses. Under the year 1557, for example, occurs this item: 'Payed to the moryrys-dausers and the mynstrelles mete and drink at Whytsontide, iij*s*. iij*d*.' Among the churchwardens' accounts, too, of the parish of St Laurence for the year 1504, we may quote the following: 'Payed for bred and ale spent to the use of the church at Whitsontyd, i*s*. v*d*. Item for wyne at the same tyme, xiiij*d*.' 1505. 'Item recvd of the mayden's gaderyng at Whitsontyde by the tre at the church dore, iij*d*.'

To cover the expenses of the church-ale, persons not unfrequently left in their wills special bequests for this purpose. Thus, Sir Richard Worsley, in his *History of the Isle of Wight*, in his description of the parish of Whitwell, tells us that there is a lease in the parish chest dated 1574, 'of a house called the Church-house, held by the inhabitants of Whitwell, parishioners of Gatcombe, of the lord of the manor, and demised by them to John Brode, in which is the following proviso: Provided always, that if the quarter shall need at any time to make a quarter-ale or church-ale for the maintenance of the chapel, that it shall be lawful for them to have the use of the said house, with all the rooms both above and beneath, during their ale.' We may also compare a similar bequest at Biddenham, in Bedfordshire. According to Edward's *Old English Customs and Remarkable Charities* (1842), 'an ancient customary donation of a quantity of malt was made

annually at Whitsuntide by the proprietor of Kempston Mill, near the parish. The malt was always delivered to the overseers of the parish of the poor for the time being, and turned by them into ale, which was distributed among all the poor inhabitants of Biddenham on Whittuesday.

It would seem that occasionally fines were enacted in the case of those who were absent from the church-ale. Thus, in an old parish document relating to the parish of Walsall, in Staffordshire, we read how, in the year 1496, 'John Arundel, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, by a decree of confirmation, under the seal of the diocese, directed to the Mayor of Walsall and his bretheren, for the advantage of Walsall Church, declaring that they (the mayor and his bretheren) shall keepe the drynkynges iii. times in the year, and hee that is absent at any of these drynkynges to forfeit a pounce of waxe to burn for the light of the chapel of Sainte Kateryn, in the sayd church.'

Apart from the feasting and merry-making which took place at these gatherings, it appears that certain amusements were provided for the recreation of the visitors. Miss Baker, in her *Glossary of Northamptonshire Words* (1854), describing the celebration of a Whitsun or church-ale early in the present century in a barn at King's Sutton, says that it was specially fitted up for the occasion. The lord, as the principal, carried a mace made of silk, finely plaited with ribbons, and filled with spices and perfumes for such of the company to smell as desired it. Six morris-dancers were amongst the performers. From the same source, we also learn that at an ale kept at Greatworth in the year 1785, all those who misconducted themselves were obliged to ride a wooden horse; and 'if still more unruly, were put into the stocks, which was termed being my lord's organist.'

Another feature of the church was the 'rush-bearing,' various allusions to which custom we find in the literature of the past. In the church-wardens' accounts of Minchinhampton, amongst the items of expenses connected with the church-ale we are told that the church-house was mossed in the year 1611 at the cost of twelve shillings and eightpence. Usually, rushes were employed for this purpose; but in this case there may have been no rushes, or else moss might have been preferred. Bridges, in his *Northamptonshire*, speaking of the parish of Middleton-Chenduit, says: 'It is a custom here to strew the church in summer with hay gathered from six or seven swaths in Ash-meadow, which have been gathered for this purpose.' This strewing of the church with rushes seems to have been attended with no small amount of festive ceremony, which thus harmonised with the general surrounding of the church-ale.

Such, then, were some of the principal characteristics of the English church-ale, an institution which, in spite of its widespread popularity, is now almost completely forgotten, its memory only lingering here and there in a few of our country villages. Existing at a period prior to the establishment of church-rates, the contributions levied at this season were a real necessity, if the fabric of the church was to be kept in repair; indeed, the church-ale, which

has been likened to our yearly fairs of the present day, was naturally made as attractive as possible, its primary object, after all, having been to provide adequate funds for parish wants.

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF.

CHAPTER XII.

THE days ran on for about a week with a suppressed and agitating expectation in them which seemed to Frances to blur and muddle all the outlines, so that she could not recollect which was Wednesday or which was Friday, but felt it all one uncomfortable long feverish sort of day. She could not take the advantage of any pleasure there might be in them—and it was a pleasure to watch Constance, to hear her talk, to catch the many glimpses of so different a life, which came from the careless, easy monologue which was her style of conversation—for the exciting sense that she did not know what might happen any moment, or what was going to become of her. Even the change from her familiar place at table, which Constance took without any thought, just as she took her father's favourite chair on the loggia, and the difference in her room, helped to confuse her mind, and add to the feverish sensation of a life altogether out of joint.

Constance had not observed any of those signs of individual habitation about the room which Frances had fancied would lead to a discovery of the transfer she had made. She took it quite calmly, not perceiving anything beyond the ordinary in the chamber which Frances had adorned with her sketches, with the little curiosities she had picked up, with all the little collections of her short life. It was wanting still in many things which to Constance seemed simple necessities. How was she to know how many things were in it which were luxuries to that primitive locality? She remained altogether unconscious, accordingly, of the sacrifice her sister had made for her, and spoke lightly of poor Frances' pet decorations, and of the sketches, the authorship of which she did not take the trouble to suspect. 'What funny little pictures,' she had said. 'Where did you get so many odd little things? They look as if the frames were home-made, as well as the drawings.'

Fortunately, she was not in the habit of waiting for an answer to such a question, and she did not remark the colour that rose to Frances' cheeks. But all this added to the disturbing influence, and made these long days look unlike any other days in her life. She took the other side of the table meekly with a half-smile at her father, warning him not to say anything; and she lodged in the blue room without thinking of adding to its comforts, for what was the use, so long as this possible alteration hung over her head? Life seemed to be arrested during these half-dozen days. They had the mingled colours and huddled outlines of a spoiled drawing; they were not like

anything else in her life, neither the established calm and certainty that went before, nor the strange novelty that followed after.

There were no confidences between her father and herself during this period. Since their conversation on the night of Constance's arrival, not a word had been said between them on the subject. They mutually avoided all occasion for further talk. At least Mr Waring avoided it, not knowing how to meet his child, or to explain to her the hazard to which her life was exposed. He did not take into consideration the attraction of the novelty, the charm of the unknown mother and the unknown life, at which Frances permitted herself to take tremulous and stealthy glimpses as the days went on. He contemplated her fate from his own point of view as something like that of the princess who was doomed to the dragon's maw, but for the never-to-be-forgotten interposition of St George, that emblem of chivalry. There was no St George visible on the horizon, and Waring thought the dragon no bad emblem of his wife. And he was ashamed to think that he was helpless to deliver her; and that, by his fault, this poor little Una, this hapless Andromeda, was to be delivered over to the waiting monster.

He avoided Frances, because he did not know how to break to her this possibility, or how, since Constance probably had made her aware of it, to console her in the terrible crisis at which she had arrived. It was a painful crisis for himself as well as for her. The first evening on which, coming into the loggia to smoke his cigarette after dinner, he had found Constance extended in his favourite chair had brought this fully home to him. He strolled out upon the open-air room with all the ease of custom, and for the first moment he did not quite understand what it was that was changed in it, that put him out, and made him feel as if he had come, not into his own familiar domestic centre, but somebody else's place. He hung about for a minute or two, confused, before he saw what it was; and then, with a half-laugh in his throat, and a mingled sense that he was annoyed, and that it was ridiculous to be annoyed, strolled across the loggia, and half seated himself on the outer wall, leaning against a pillar. He was astonished to think how much annoyed he was, and with what a comical sense of injury he saw his daughter lying back so entirely at her ease in his chair. She was his daughter, but she was a stranger, and it was impossible to tell her that her place was not there. Next evening, he was almost angry, for he thought that Frances might have told her, though he could not. And indeed Frances had done what she could to warn her sister of the usurpation. But Constance had no idea of vested rights of this description, and had paid no attention. She took very little notice, indeed, of what was said to her, unless it arrested her attention in some special way; and she had never been trained to understand that the master of a house has sacred privileges. She had not so much as known what it is to have a master to a house.

This and other trifles of the same kind gave to Waring something of the same confused and feverish feeling which was in the mind of Frances. And there hung over him a cloud as of some-

thing further to come, which was not so clear as her anticipations, yet was full of discomfort and apprehension. He thought of many things, not of one thing, as she did. It seemed to him not impossible that his wife herself might arrive some day as suddenly as Constance had done, to reclaim her child, or to take away his, for that was how they were distinguished in his mind. The idea of seeing again the woman from whom he had been separated so long, filled him with dread; and that she should come here and see the limited and reclusive life he led, and his bare rooms, and his homely servants, filled him with a kind of horror. Rather anything than that. He did not like to contemplate even the idea that it might be necessary to give up the girl, who had flattered him by taking refuge with him and seeking his protection; but neither was the thought of being left with her and having Frances taken from him endurable. In short, his mind was in a state of mortal confusion and tumult. He was like the commander of a besieged city, not knowing on what day he might be summoned to surrender; not able to come to any conclusion whether it would be most wise to yield, or if the state of his resources afforded any feasible hopes of holding out.

Constance had been a week at the Palazzo before the trumpets sounded. The letters were delivered just before the twelve o'clock breakfast, and Frances had received so much warning as this, that Mariuccia informed her there had been a large delivery that morning. The Signor padrone had a great packet; and there were also some letters for the other young lady, Signorina Constanza. 'But never any for thee, carina,' Mariuccia had said. The poor girl thus addressed had a momentary sense that she was indeed to be pitied on this account, before the excitement of the certainty, that now something definite must be known as to what was to become of her, swelled her veins to bursting; and she felt herself grow giddy with the thought that what had been so vague and visionary, might now be coming near, and that in an hour or less she would know! Waring was as usual shut up in his bookroom; but she could see Constance on the loggia with her lap full of letters, lying back in the long chair as usual, reading them as if they were the most ordinary things in the world. Frances for her part had to wait in silence until she should learn from others what her fate was to be. It seemed very strange that one girl should be free to do so much, while another of the same age could do nothing at all.

Waring came in to breakfast with the letters in his hand. 'I have heard from your mother,' he said, looking straight before him, without turning to the right or the left. Frances tried to appropriate this to herself, to make some reply, but her voice died in her throat; and Constance, with the easiest certainty that it was she who was addressed, answered before she could recover herself.

'Yes? So have I. Mamma is rather fond of writing letters. She says she has told you what she wishes, and then she tells me to tell you. I don't suppose that is of much use?'

'Of no use at all,' said he. 'She is pretty explicit. She says'—

Constance leant over the table a little, holding

up her finger. 'Don't you think, papa,' she said, 'as it is business, that it would be better not to enter upon it just now? Wait till we have had our breakfast.'

He looked at her with an air of surprise. 'I don't see,' he said—then, after a moment's reflection: 'Perhaps you are right, after all. It may be better not to say anything just now.'

Frances had recovered her voice. She looked from one to another as they spoke with a cruel consciousness that it was she, not they, who was most concerned. At this point she burst forth with feelings not to be controlled. 'If it is on my account, I would rather know at once what it is,' she cried.

And then she had to bear the looks of both—her father's astonished half-remorseful gaze, and the eyes of Constance, which conveyed a warning. Why should Constance, who had told her of the danger, warn her now not to betray her knowledge of it? Frances had got beyond her own control. She was vexed by the looks which were fixed upon her, and by the supposed consideration for her comfort which lay in their delay. 'I know,' she said quickly, 'that it is something about me. If you think I care for breakfast, you are mistaken; but I think I have a right to know what it is, if it is about me.—O papa, I don't mean to be—disagreeable,' she cried suddenly, sinking into her own natural tone as she caught his eye.

'That is not very much like you, certainly,' he said, in a confused voice.

'Evil communications,' said Constance, with a laugh. 'I have done her harm already.'

Frances felt that her sister's voice threw a new irritation into her mood. 'I am not like myself,' she said, 'because I know something is going to happen to me, and I don't know what it is.—Papa, I don't want to be selfish, but let me know, please, only let me know what it is.'

'It is only that mamma has sent for you,' said Constance lightly. 'That is all. It is nothing so very dreadful.—Now, do let us have our breakfast in peace.'

'Is that true, papa?' Frances said.

'My dear little girl—I had meant to explain it all—to tell you—and I have been so silly as to put off. Your sister does not understand how we have lived together, Frances, you and I.'

'Am I to go, papa?'

He made a gesture of despair. 'I don't know what to do. I have given my promise. It is as bad for me as for you, Frances. But what am I to do?'

'I suppose,' said Constance, who had helped herself very tranquilly from the dish which Domenico had been holding unobserved at his master's elbow, 'that there is no law that could make you part with her, if you don't wish to. Promises are all very well with strangers; but they are never kept—are they?—between husband and wife. The father has all the right on his side; and you are not obliged to give either of us up.—What a blessing,' she cried suddenly, 'to have servants who don't understand. That was why I said don't talk of it till after breakfast. But it does not at all matter. It is as good as if he were deaf and dumb.—Papa, you need not give her up unless you like.'

Waring looked at his daughter with mingled

attention and anger. The suggestion was detestable, but yet—

'And then,' she went on, 'there is another thing. It might have been all very well when we were children; but now we are of an age to judge for ourselves. At eighteen, you can choose which you will stay with. Oh, younger than that. There have been several trials in the papers. No one can force Frances to go anywhere she does not like, at her age.'

'I wish,' he said with a little irritation, restrained by politeness, for Constance was still a young-lady visitor to her father, 'that you would leave this question to be discussed afterwards.—Your sister was right, Frances—after breakfast—after I have had a little time to think of it. I cannot come to any decision all at once.'

'That is a great deal better,' said Constance approvingly. 'One can't tell all in a moment. Frances is like mamma in that too. She requires you to know your own mind—to say Yes or No at once.—You and I are very like each other, papa. I shall never hurry your decision, or ask you to settle a thing in a moment.—But these outlets are getting quite cold. Do have some before they are spoiled.'

Waring had no mind for the outlets, to which he helped himself mechanically. He did not like to look at Frances, who sat silent, with her hands clasped on the table, pale, but with a light in her eyes. The voice of Constance running on, forming a kind of veil for the trouble and confusion in his own mind, and doubtless in that of her sister, was half a relief and half an aggravation; he was grateful for it, yet irritated by it. He felt himself to play a very poor figure in the transaction altogether, as he had felt ever since she arrived. Frances, whom he had regarded as a child, had sprung up into a judge, into all the dignity of an injured person, whose right to complain of the usage to which she had been subjected no one could deny. And when he stole a furtive glance at her pale face, her head held high, the new light that burned in her eyes, he felt that she was fully aware of the wrong he had done her, and that it would not be so easy to dictate what she was to do, as everybody up to this moment had supposed. He saw, or thought he saw, resistance, indignation in the gleam that had been awakened in Frances' dove's eyes. And his heart fell—yet rose also—for how could he constrain her, if she refused to go? He had no right to constrain her. Her mother might complain; but it would not be his doing. On the other side, it would be shameful, pitiable on his part to go back from his word—to acknowledge to his wife that he could not do what he had pledged himself to do.

In every way, it was an uncomfortable breakfast, all the forms of which he followed, partly for the sake of Constance, partly for that of Domenico. But Frances ate nothing, he could see. He prolonged the meal, through a sort of fear of the interview afterwards, of what he must say to her, and of what she should reply. He felt ashamed of his reluctance to encounter this young creature, whom a few days ago he had smiled at as a child; and ashamed to look her in the face, to explain and argue with, and intreat,

where he had been always used to tell her to do this and that, without the faintest fear that she would disobey him. If even he had been left to tell her himself of all the circumstances, to make her aware gradually of all that he had kept from her (for her good), to show her now how his word was pledged! But even this had been taken out of his hands.

All this time, no one talked but Constance, who went on with an occasional remark and with her meal, for which she had a good appetite. 'I wish you would eat something, Frances,' she said. 'You need not begin to punish yourself at once. I feel it dreadfully, for it is all my fault. It is I who ought to lose my breakfast, not you. If you will take a few hints from me, I don't think you will find it so bad. Or perhaps, if we all lay our heads together, we may see some way out of it. Papa knows the law, and I know the English side, and you know what you think yourself. Let us talk it all over, and perhaps we may see our way.'

To this, Frances made no reply save a little inclination of her head, and sat with her eyes shining, with a certain proud air of self-control and self-support, which was something quite new to her. When the uncomfortable repast could be prolonged no longer, she was the first to get up. 'If you do not mind,' she said, 'I want to speak to papa by himself.'

Constance had risen too. She looked with an air of surprise at her little sister. 'Oh, if you like,' she said; 'but I think you will find that I can be of use.'

'If you are going to the bookroom, I will come with you, papa,' said Frances; but she did not wait for any reply; she opened the door and walked before him into that place of refuge, where he had been sheltering himself all these days. Constance gave him an inquiring look, with a slight shrug of her shoulders.

'She is on her high-horse, and she is more like mamma than ever; but I suppose I may come all the same.'

He wavered a moment; he would have been glad of her interposition, even though it irritated him; but he had a whimsical sense of alarm in his mind, which he could not get over. He was afraid of Frances—which was one of the most comical things in the world. He shook his head, and followed humbly into the bookroom, and himself closed the door upon the intruder. Frances had seated herself already at his table, in the seat which she always occupied when she came to consult him about the dinner, or about something out of the usual round which Mariuccia had asked for. To see her seated there, and to feel that the door was closed against all intrusion, made Waring feel as if all this disturbance was a dream. How good the quiet had been; the calm days, which nothing interfered with; the little housekeeper, whose child-like prudence and wisdom were so quaint, whose simple obedience was so ready, who never, save in respect to the *spese*, set up her own will or way. His heart grew very soft as he sat down and looked at her. No, he said to himself; he would not break that old bond; he would not compel his little girl to leave him, send her out as a sacrifice. He would rather stand against all the wives in the world.

'Papa,' said Frances, 'a great deal of harm has been done by keeping me ignorant. I want you to show me mamma's letter. Unless I see it, how can I know?'

This pulled him up abruptly and checked the softening mood. 'Your mother's letter,' he said, 'goes over a great deal of old ground. I don't see that it could do you any good. It appears, I promised—what Constance told you, with her usual coolness—that one of you should be always left with her. Perhaps that was foolish.'

'Surely, papa, it was just.'

'Well, I thought so at the time. I wanted to do what was right. But there was no right in the matter. I had a perfect right to take you both away, to bring you up as I pleased. It would have been better, perhaps, had I done what the law authorised me to do. However, that need not be gone into now. What your sister said was quite true. You are at an age when you are supposed to judge for yourself, and nobody in the world can force you to go where you don't want to go.'

'But if you promised; and if—my mother trusted to your promise?' There was something more solemn in that title, than to say 'mamma.' It seemed easier to apply it to the unknown.

'I won't have you made a sacrifice of, on my account,' he said hastily.

He was surprised by her composure, by that unwonted light in her eyes. She answered him with great gravity, slowly, as if conscious of the importance of her conclusion. 'It would be no sacrifice,' she said.

Waring, there could be no doubt, was very much startled. He could not believe his ears. 'No sacrifice? Do you mean to say that you want to leave me?' he cried.

'No, papa; that is, I did not. I knew nothing. But now that I know, if my mother wants me, I will go to her. It is my duty.—And I should like it,' she added, after a pause.

Waring was dumb with surprise and dismay. He stared at her, scarcely able to believe that she could understand what she was saying. He, who had been afraid to suggest anything of the kind, who had thought of Andromeda and the virgins who were sacrificed to the dragon. He gazed aghast at this new aspect of the face with which he was so familiar, the uplifted head and shining eyes. He could not believe that this was Frances, his always docile, submissive, un-embarrassed girl.

'Papa,' she said, 'everything seems changed, and I too. I want to know my mother; I want to see—how other people live.'

'Other people!' He was glad of an outlet for his irritation. 'What have we to do with other people? If it had not been for this unlucky arrival, you would never have known.'

'I must have known some time,' she said. 'And do you think it right that a girl should not know her mother—when she has a mother? I want to go to her, papa.'

He flung out of his chair with an angry movement, and took up the keys which lay on his table, and opened a small cabinet which stood in the corner of the room, Frances watching him all the time with the greatest attention. Out of this he brought a small packet of letters, and threw them to her with a movement which,

for so gentle a man, 'was almost violent. 'I kept these back for your good, not to disturb your mind. You may as well have them, since they belong to you—now,' he said.

POISONS AND THEIR ANTIDOTES.

'Poison may be defined as any substance which when introduced into the system or applied externally injures health or destroys life irrespective of mechanical means or direct thermal changes.' Such is the concise and apt definition of poison laid down in Dr Quain's *Medical Dictionary*. The action of poisons is twofold, being either local or remote, or both. The local action is generally one of a corrosive or inflammatory nature, or is characterised by its effects upon the nerves and sensations. Although it is impossible to deal with so vast a subject in detail, yet nevertheless it cannot be denied that a general knowledge of some of the most virulent poisons and their antidotes is not only a subject of great interest to the public, but at times a matter of life and death. By a fair insight into poisons and their antidotes, life indeed may often be saved, when the delay caused by seeking for medical advice would probably be fatal. The purpose of this paper, therefore, will be to deal as clearly as possible with the most general poisons and their symptoms, and to point out such antidotes as in cases of emergency may be most readily employed.

An acquaintance with the leading symptoms produced by certain poisons is an important factor, for thereby we may hope more rapidly to recognise the especial destructive agency at work, and thus to arrest its further progress. Great care, however, is requisite never to draw a hasty conclusion from one symptom alone, but to bear in mind other signs upon which a correct diagnosis can alone be based. Many attempts have from time to time been made with a view to classify poisons; but the most rational classification is obviously that which is in accordance with their special action. They may therefore be divided generally under the following heads—(1) Corrosives; (2) Irritants; and (3) Neurotics.

Under the head of corrosives, corrosive sublimate stands foremost in importance, being the most typical of this class. The effects are rapid in their development, being well marked by a burning sensation felt in the mouth and throat, followed by agonising pain in the stomach. The tongue and throat have a white appearance, and excessive tenderness and swelling of the abdomen is noticeable. All authorities agree in recommending albumen in the form of raw eggs—both yolk and white—switched up with a little water, as the best antidote in cases of acute poisoning from corrosive sublimate. The albumen combines with the corrosive sublimate to form an insoluble and comparatively inert compound. Should eggs not be immediately obtainable, gluten obtained from flour, or wheat-flour alone mixed with milk or water, may be given until the more reliable antidote is ready. The chief of the corrosive poisons are the mineral acids, sulphuric, nitric, and hydrochloric; the vegetable acids, oxalic, binoxalate of potash (commonly called salt of lemon and salt of sorrel), and occasionally in large doses tartaric acid; the alkalies, potash,

soda, and ammonia, with certain of their salts, such as pearl-ash (commonly called salt of tartar), carbonate of soda (commonly called washing-soda), and carbonate of ammonia; also various metallic compounds, including salts of zinc, tin, silver, and antimony, &c. Poisoning by oxalic acid is a very common method chosen by would-be suicides, probably owing to the fact that it is a substance much used in household operations, and therefore readily obtainable by any one bent on committing suicide. In speaking of the action of this poison, that renowned authority the late Sir Robert Christison observes in his splendid work on Toxicology: 'If a person immediately after swallowing a solution of a crystalline salt which tasted purely and strongly acid, is attacked with burning in the throat, then with burning in the stomach, vomiting, particularly of bloody matter, imperceptible pulse, and excessive languor, and dies in half an hour or twenty minutes, or still more in ten or fifteen minutes, I do not know any fallacy which can interfere with the conclusion that oxalic acid was the cause of death.'

It is obvious in such cases that the chances of success in applying antidotes depend very much upon their immediate employment. For the mineral acids, alkaline bicarbonates, such as bicarbonates of potash or soda (baking-soda), chalk, or magnesia should at once be given, followed by milk; whilst oxalic acid is best treated by the administration of chalk, or magnesia either plain or in the form of carbonate, whereby the insoluble and almost inert oxalates of lime and magnesia are formed.

When poisoning is occasioned by the alkalies potash, soda, or ammonia, or their carbonates, carbonate of potash (also known as pearl-ash or salt of tartar), carbonate of soda (washing-soda), and carbonate of ammonia, a strong burning sensation is experienced in swallowing, followed by severe pain and great tenderness at the pit of the stomach, increased by pressure. There are frequent vomits of a brownish matter, swelling of the stomach, and hoarseness of the voice. When seeking to counteract the disastrous effects resulting from this variety of poisons, the great object aimed at is to neutralise the caustic alkalies. This may be best accomplished by means of well-diluted acid drinks copiously imbibed, as advised by Stevenson, who, further, is of opinion that the prompt use of an emetic is never inadmissible. Vinegar and water, lemon-juice with water, also oil, are recommended by Dr Russell under such circumstances. The oil forms a saponaceous compound with the alkali, whilst acid drinks neutralise the alkaline action.

Irritant poisons are divisible under two heads—(1) Metallic irritants; (2) Vegetable and animal irritants, the latter two being grouped together. It would, however, appear that none of them act purely as irritants, as the irritant symptoms to which they give rise are likewise usually accompanied by well-marked action upon the nervous system. The most serious poison of this class is undoubtedly arsenic. Salts of antimony, zinc, and other metals constitute a variety of other metallic irritants. Of the vegetable irritant poisons, elaterium, various essential oils such as savin, and gamboge, afford examples. Poisoning by arsenic may be either acute or chronic, the

acute form being by far most common, following criminal attempts on life. Its effect on the economy is twofold, the most usual being by inducing inflammation of the gastro-intestinal mucous membrane, or by lowering the heart's action. Its effects in some instances may be purely narcotic. The first symptoms of arsenical poisoning, according to Orfila, are sickness and faintness, which arise about fifteen minutes after being taken. An intense burning pain is also felt in the stomach, quickly followed by vomiting, increased on attempting to swallow.

Poisoning by arsenic is distinguished from an ordinary bilious attack by the fact that pain and sickness are *not* relieved by vomiting, which usually happens in biliary derangements. A feeble and irregular pulse, accompanied by thirst, with clammy hands, are prominent symptoms of arsenical poisoning. The immediate employment of emetics—except tartar emetic—dilutents, and demulcents, has been suggested as perhaps the most serviceable antidotes; but no confidence should be placed in the so-called antidotes, ferrie hydrate and magnesia, unless a solution of arsenic has been taken. In chronic arsenical poisoning, most frequently engendered accidentally, by inhalation of arsenical vapour in factories, or by arsenical dust, loss of muscular power and failure of appetite are amongst the most prominent symptoms manifest. Under such circumstances, the cause—which is usually some occupation connected with the manipulation of arsenic—should be promptly sought for and removed—quinine, iron, and change of air being recommended.

Neurotic poisons may be divided into a large category; but in one and all, the symptoms produced from their administration chiefly attack the nervous system. Under this head are embraced pure narcotics, such as morphia, chloral hydrate, strychnia, hyoscyamus, &c. Prussic acid occupies a prominent position, as its effects and termination are very rapid in progress, being one of the most powerful of all poisons. Difficulty of breathing, speedily followed by convulsions, the commencement of which is announced by a loud shriek occasionally, are manifest; subsequently, loss of consciousness and muscular power. Fifteen minutes is the longest time known to elapse between taking this poison and its effects. In some works it is stated that the best mode of treating prussic-acid poisoning is by the application of cold affusions before or after the convulsive stage has commenced, and the inhalation of diluted ammonia or chlorine. Stevenson advises an emetic to be administered also. Friction and artificial respiration have been recommended by other authorities.

Opium and its preparations deserve especial notice, as the greater number of poisoning cases are due to their action. Although the symptoms of opium-poisoning greatly vary, yet they are mostly ushered in by giddiness, listlessness, and drowsiness, followed by stupor, lapsing slowly into complete insensibility. Opium-poisoning is unfortunately often occasioned by the indiscriminate use of 'sleeping-draughts' and quack nostrums. In cases of opium-poisoning, the immediate use of an emetic (a tablespoonful of mustard mixed with tepid water) has been advocated. The head and face should be dashed

with cold water until the stupor is partially removed. The patient should *not* be permitted to sleep, but should be kept in continual motion. A cup of strong hot coffee ought to be given to him on his recovery.

Our space will not permit of a more minute inquiry into other varieties of neurotic poisons; suffice it to say, that in most instances arising from the administration of any preparation of opium, the antidotes above mentioned are considered the most serviceable.

We must not omit to notice poisoning by copper, which at times has arisen by the employment of copper vessels for cooking purposes, which never should be employed in any household. The first indications of copper-poisoning are sudden attacks of griping pains, aggravated by pressure, often accompanied by sickness and a peculiar sallowness of countenance. According to Ryan, the white of egg is the best antidote for poisonous preparations of copper. Lead-poisoning is usually owing either to drinking water which has remained for some time in leaden pipes, or by certain avocations in which some preparation of lead is used. Goulard water taken by mistake causes lead-poisoning. Lead-colic is one of its leading symptoms, which is relieved by pressure. Paralysis of the limbs is another well-marked indication. Sulphate of magnesia has been recommended as an antidote. A dram of sulphate of magnesia, five drops of dilute sulphuric acid, and twenty drops of tincture of hyoscyamus in two tablespoonfuls of camphor-water every two hours till the bowels are relieved, and then thrice daily for five days, is the treatment which some consider most appropriate under these circumstances.

In drawing this article to a close, we desire to impress upon our readers the vital importance, in all cases of poisoning, of being able immediately to administer the antidotes, while the medical man is being summoned. Many a valuable life would undoubtedly be saved, were the precautions before mentioned adopted without a moment's delay.

THE FEN FLOOD.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.—CHAP. III.

THORPE had stated that he was going to Stetton, and incidentally that he would make inquiries there regarding Jabez Godfrey. The truth was, his errand to the little market town was solely on the old farmer's account. He entertained a respect almost amounting to affection for Ruth's father, and had all morning, in spite of his own troubles, been haunted by apprehensions for his safety. He felt certain that, if he had reached Stetton, he would make the attempt to reach Greendykes either on horseback or by boat. If the former, his fate was sealed; and if by the latter, he was exposed to many chances equally fatal. Had Thorpe not been delayed by compulsory attention to his own people and his own affairs, he would have set out earlier; but as it was, he fully expected to be in time to offer the old man a passage in his own boat. Fearing to alarm Ruth and her mother, he had not acquainted them either with his fears or his intentions.

It is easy to understand that the care of the boat and the nature of his mission caused George in a measure to forget the nature of his brief

interview with Ruth. He was shocked and wounded in his self-love, and every now and then recalled with bitterness some flippant word or mocking look he had received in return for his own constancy and devotion. Not being endowed with any large share of imagination, he could not believe Ruth's thoughtless conduct compatible with any solid womanly qualities, far less with affection for himself. To him, she showed only the wild spirits and the frolicsome inconsiderateness of an untamed girl; nor could he credit her even with a modicum of that sound practical sense and unselfishness which formed the real though hidden basis of her character. The more he thought, the firmer his conviction grew that his own self-respect could only suffer more and more the longer he continued his attendance on her; and his previous irresoluteness now gave place to a fixed determination to withdraw from this one-sided courtship.

The rain had not yet ceased; but instead of the torrents in which it fell in the night, or the steady pelt of the morning, there was only a drizzling fall, accompanied by a slight haze. This thin gray mist gave a yet more weird and sinister aspect to the landscape, if such a term can be applied under the circumstances; it also enhanced by many degrees the difficulty of the task which Thorpe had generously undertaken. Such trees and house-tops as they passed, though sure guides at ordinary times, could not now be identified, and were therefore valueless under the present conditions. Everything was dim and indistinct at a distance of half a mile. They were, indeed, on a trackless sea without beacon or compass. For a time, the smoke curling from Greendykes, in their wake, afforded them a point by which to steer; but when that had disappeared, the two boatmen rowed at random. The sign on the front of a roadway inn was at length recognised, and they once more felt at ease. Thorpe called for some refreshment. A window on the second story was opened, and a girl with a tear-stained face appeared. In answer to his inquiries, she informed George that her master, the landlord, had been drowned by falling into the channel of the dike while riding to Stetton in the morning. She pointed out the direction they should take, and closed the window.

Thorpe and Ashling pulled swiftly, but in silence. Now and then their speed was arrested by the necessity of avoiding flotsam and jetsam of various descriptions—masses of hay or corn, timber, gates, harrows, carcasses. They had left the inn about a mile behind, when they fortunately passed a finger-post. The road to Stetton, indicated by one of its arms, was plainly traced for a considerable way by the trees which skirted both sides at irregular distances. Here their progress was easy for a time; but by degrees they found the current increase at right angles to their route, making it difficult to retain the boat between the two lines of trees, against the stem of one of which they had a narrow escape from being upset. Thorpe concluded that they were now approaching the main drain or dike of Stetton Fen. The road they were following crossed it by a bridge, and this he was anxious to make; for, although the viaduct would be flooded like the rest of the roadway, the parapets

would break the force of the stream, and render their passage safer than by crossing the channel of the dike itself. He therefore gave Tom such orders as would keep the head of the boat well against the force of the tide, and so enable them to approach the drain at the required point.

This bridge was exactly a mile from Stetton market, the milestone standing, as Thorpe knew, a few yards on its further side. It was now three o'clock; and the leaden sky and the haze, which seemed to gain in density, threatened to forestall the natural hour of darkness; a few minutes more, however, would bring them to one end of their journey, and both the young men began to breathe more freely. They were within two hundred yards of the bridge, when Thorpe, who stood in the bows with a boat-hook in his hand, observed another boat with a single occupant at a similar distance from the opposite side of the dike. He noticed at the same time that the boat was out of line with the bridge and higher up the stream; so that, in crossing, it would run the risk of fouling the parapet, and being dashed to pieces. He shouted to the solitary rower to go further down, giving his reasons. The advice was readily heard and understood, and the boat's head was turned accordingly. Both boats neared the bridge at the same moment. Thorpe caught the upper parapet with the hook and began to draw slowly across, when he saw that the other boat had missed the passage and was rapidly drifting down with the flow of the dike. The occupant, an elderly man, had evidently missed his way, by being unable to gauge the distance over his shoulder, and had struck the lower parapet and lost an oar.

'Take the other oar and scull!' shouted Thorpe, as he noticed that the old man sat helplessly with one oar over the side, causing the boat to gyrate as if in the circles of a whirlpool.

'Ay, ay,' returned the man, as he collected himself and proceeded to do as directed. He sculled both skilfully and strongly.

'I say, master, I reckon that there's nobody else but old Daddie Godfrey hissen,' cried Tom Ashling.

The same discovery had just flashed upon George.

'Quick, Tom! Let us go back and follow him.'

The boat's head was turned, and each having taken an oar, the distance between them and the fugitive boat was rapidly lessening. Godfrey had got free of the channel, and was manfully struggling to get beyond its influence altogether, when his boat, striking its keel against the top of a gate, heeled over, and the old man was left struggling in the water. Neither Thorpe nor Ashling had seen the accident, but they heard with alarm the wild cry for help, through the now gathering gloom.

Ruth had watched her lover's boat till it disappeared in the thickening haze, watched it in grief, with yearning, and in dread. The newly quickened ardour of her affection also quickened her terrors. That veil of gray vapour seemed to hide her hopes and the object of those hopes for ever. Her love divined the real purpose of that dangerous voyage. The man whom she had treated with the airs and language of a saucy

child had taken his life in his hand to save that of her father. How weak, how small, how guilty she felt! But Ruth was, as we have tried to convey, morally as well as physically robust and pliant. After another flood of bitter tears in the sanctity of her own room, she rallied her spirits, removed the traces of sorrow, and in a frame of mind composed in some degree by good resolutions, betook herself to her mother's room. The old lady expressed some surprise at her long absence, but more particularly at the fact that Thorpe had come and gone without seeing her. Ruth merely stated what the young farmer had said, that he had business at Stetton, but would call in the evening. She then told her mother that she would take Bob and go in the boat to see how the labourers' families were getting on. One of the women, she knew, was down with ague, and might require assistance.

Like all charitable thoughts, this one was as a healing balm to Ruth's heart. The excitement and change which she felt in anticipation further soothed her. There was also the secret joy of imitating, after a fashion, the self-sacrificing and generous spirit of her lover. Her arrangements were soon made. She filled a basket with trifling delicacies, such as children and invalids appreciate, and some simple medicines from her mother's pharmacopoeia. She instructed Jennie to prepare a large mess of meat, game, and vegetables for supper—a dish specially relished by her father; and having kissed her mother and told her she would be back to tea, set out on her mission. Bob, like all Fen-men in those days, was accustomed to handling a boat, and as the way to the cottages was direct and clearly defined, the journey was a short one. They had no difficulty in attracting the attention of the poor women and children, who, beside themselves with joy at seeing the 'young missus,' clustered and jostled each other at the tiny attic casements. They had been immured in those wretched little chambers the whole day without occupation or amusement, and with the terrors of their own position only varied by fears for husband and father. Ruth's visit, therefore, although limited to a chat held between the boat and the windows, was inexpressibly welcome. The children received their cakes and tarts with clamorous delight, one rogue declaring it 'was as good as the parson's school-feast—for all the "drown'd." The women naturally spoke of little but their husbands; they were, as might be expected, full of distress at their absence, but took heart from Ruth's hopeful view of matters, and her promise to see that they wanted for nothing. She told the youngsters laughingly that if the 'drown'd' did not disappear, she would send Bob to give them a row in the boat on the morrow. The invalid was no worse, and was very grateful for the wine and medicines Ruth had brought. Having thus cheered and reassured one and all, Ruth returned to the farmhouse, chilled and wet.

Night was closing over the deluged landscape. The lamps had already been lit in her mother's room, as well as in that which served as kitchen for the nonce. After warming herself by the fire, Ruth set out the tea-table, and privately ordered Jennie to place a light in every window of the house. Her courage and

presence of mind were in a large measure recovered; and if her manner had lost some of its liveliness and her laugh some of its merriment, the change was unobserved by the old lady, whose thoughts seemed to dwell more and more upon her husband. Ruth tried every artifice in her extensive repertoire of feminine weapons, to distract her mind, but in vain. There was a far-off look in the pleasant round face, a wistful sadness and seriousness, so unusual, so striking, and so infectious, that the girl by degrees felt a chill creep over her own heart. Could it be that some mystic, psychic sympathy with those they loved, some secret consciousness of their danger, possessed them?

The tea-table cleared, Ruth tried anew to rouse her mother by narrating particulars of her visit to the cottages, giving to every little incident a touch of her own bright humour, in the hope of extracting a smile; but with small success. The arrival of the three labourers, however, with the report that they had got the horses and cattle placed in safety and that Jackson remained to tend them, somewhat raised Mrs Godfrey's spirits. They had had a bad time of it, they said, but were none the worse. Having been first well entertained by Jennie, they set out in their borrowed boat for their homes.

Ruth now went to see that the lights were still burning at the different windows. The rain had altogether ceased, and a light southerly wind had scattered the haze. The young moon was already high above the horizon, and a few stars glimmered palely between the driving clouds. This favourable change in the weather made the young girl's heart leap high with fresh hope, and she hastened to convey the good news to her mother. She took up her station once more at the window, gazing earnestly over the inundated plain in the direction of Stetton. The rays of the moon as it issued at intervals from the clouds, like the rays from a revolving beacon, fell gently athwart the scene, silvering the discoloured waters, and shimmering among the wet branches of the trees. As she gazed, she fancied she heard the noise of oars, but her straining eyes could detect no boat. She listened, and the sounds again reached her ears. And there, at last, as the inconstant moon once more pierced through the clouds, she distinctly saw a boat pulling swiftly in the direction of Greendykes. A few minutes more—though they were hours in duration to Ruth's excited mind—and the boat had drawn up to the window at which she stood, and her father, Thorpe, and Tom Ashling were speedily in the room beside her.

We pass over the various greetings of the reunited friends. As soon as these were over, Jabez Godfrey and Thorpe went to change their dress, while Tom took a seat by the fire beside Bob and Jennie, where we shall leave him to his bacon and beer, and to narrate his adventures in his own way.

A pleasant evening for the other characters of our simple story of Fen-life, closed a day passed in gloom, danger, and anxiety. The supper-board was amply supplied, and the two farmers partook with their customary good-will. Ruth attended to their wants almost in silence; while Dame Godfrey, as if in compensation, now asked a question of George or Jabez, and now expatiated

at length on the day's experience at Greendykes. From all which may be gathered what remains of interest to the reader. The old farmer had left Cambridge early in the morning on horseback, but had had to exchange this mode of travelling when he approached the Fen. He had met with some adventures, and had heard at Stetton of many sad accidents and of heavy destruction of property. These he dwelt upon briefly; but spoke with seriousness and with many expressions of gratitude of his own near escape from death, and the courage which Thorpe had displayed in saving him. From his account, it appears that he had already sunk twice, when the intrepid George, springing into the water, had seized him and supported him till Ashling and he were able to place him in the boat. George ingenuously protested that he himself incurred no real danger, but was forced to listen over and over again to the voluble but sincere thanks of the old lady, who turned pale at the very thought of the peril in which her husband had been placed. Thorpe perhaps felt more pleasure in the grateful look which beamed in Ruth's face and the sympathising tears that stood in her eyes.

'And by-the-bye, Ruth,' said her father, with a sly twinkle in his eye, 'I not only lost the boat, but all the finery I was fool enough to buy for you at Cambridge. There is a handsome dress lying somewhere about Parish's twelve-acre.'

'O father, how can you think of such things? I am glad they *are* lost. I could never bear the sight of them, after the misery we have been in all day about you;' and she flung her arms round his neck and kissed him.

Thorpe listened to this, and wondered vastly. He listened also with gradually increasing interest to Mrs Godfrey's account of what had been done at Greendykes, from the saving of the furniture to the securing of the horses, cows, &c. The ordinary routine of the household, the old dame added, had gone on like 'clockwork' in spite of the flood. It was Ruth, too, he learned, that had thought of everything, even to fixing the lights in all the windows, which had assisted them so much on their homeward voyage. The visit to the cottages was also referred to; and the old lady wound up her narrative by saying: 'I don't know whatever would have become of us all, but for Ruth. She thought of everything herself, an' kept up all our spirits. I am sure Jabez himself could have done no better, though I was mortal anxious that he should ha' been at hum.'

'Well,' said the old farmer, 'it must be a comfort to Ruth to have a head and to know how to use it.—Eh, lass, I am main glad you have managed so well, and I must try to make up for the loss of that dress and those.'

'Pray, father, don't tease me,' cried Ruth, colouring. 'I was thinking you might be willing to help a little to make up the loss of things at the cottages; and there, dad, if you do, I shan't want a new gown or bonnet till summer. Will you?' and she once more threw her arms round the old man's neck.

George Thorpe was also beginning to have a revelation, although his intuitions had scarcely the lightning speed of Ruth's. He was unusually silent, even for him; and conversely, he thought more deeply than was his mental habit. All this was truly wonderful to him. He fancied

himself dreaming; then he began slowly to lose sight of the merry-hearted, thoughtless romp, who had so often given him the heartache, and to see only the clever, brave, and tender-hearted woman whom it would be an honest man's pride to make his wife.

The truth is, of course, that George and Ruth were neither better nor worse than they had ever been, but now they had both come to understand and respect each other; and thus the currents of their young lives were not parted, but blended. Some months after the flood had ceased to be spoken about except by those who thought it a convenient reference date in their calendar, there was a quiet marriage solemnised in the ancient church of Stetton parish, the bride and bridegroom being no other than the simple pair whom that untoward event had happily brought together. The bride, be it recorded, was, considering all things, a trifle too plainly attired to merit the approval of her young neighbours; but that circumstance did not affect seriously her own or George's happiness. The Thorpes are a numerous, hardy race in and around Stetton at this day; and some of them are pleased to claim to have sprung from that happy wedding, and to recount the tales told in their family regarding the last of the Fen floods, which, like the fever and ague, have under a more complete system of drainage long become, we are happy to say, matters of history.

HOME-NURSING.

BY A LADY.

SEVENTH ARTICLE.

COUNTER-IRRITANTS, our next point of consideration, play an important part in drawing off to the skin inflammation which has attacked internal organs. The counter-irritant in most common use is mustard, which is prepared according to the strength required. For a very stinging plaster, mix ordinary table mustard to a smooth paste, and spread to the thickness of about an eighth of an inch, on brown paper or rag. Better still is a 'mustard leaf,' which is clean, comfortable, and easily applied, needing only to be soaked for a few seconds in water, cold in summer, tepid in winter. It is a good plan with delicate skins to put a piece of very thin muslin or tissue-paper between the plaster, or leaf and the skin; otherwise, the irritation is apt to be so excessive as to raise blisters, which are often troublesome to heal. In all cases where the skin has not been protected, it should be carefully examined, and all adhering particles be gently sponged off with warm water; the part must then be dried and covered with medicated or cotton wool. Thus treated, there will generally be but slight after-irritation; but should it continue, or be distressing to the patient, dusting with flour or violet powder will give immediate relief. In applying such a plaster to the throat or chest, it is necessary to cover it well with wool or flannel; otherwise, the fumes from the mustard may produce an irritation of the air-passages, which will do more harm than the plaster will do good.

For a less stimulating plaster, half-flour and half-mustard, or one-third of mustard to two-

thirds of flour, may be used, and prepared as above. Some people prefer to substitute linseed for flour; in this case, mix the linseed with boiling water, as for a poultice, and add the mustard, continuing to stir sharply; or, the mustard and linseed may be well mixed before putting into the water.

The mildest way of using mustard is to lightly dust over the surface of an ordinary linseed poultice; or a small quantity, say a teaspoonful to a tablespoonful, according to size, may be mixed with the meal before wetting, and the poultice be put into a bag, as described in our last paper.

A nurse should be particular in ascertaining how long either sort of plaster is to be kept on, as there is a wonderful variety in the sensitiveness of different skins. I have known patients unable to bear the all-mustard treatment for more than two or three minutes; whilst others will not be half so much affected at the end of a quarter of an hour. The third variety, which partakes more of the character of a poultice than a plaster, is generally kept on for hours, and the point to be sure of then is the exact proportion of mustard. It will not do to rely upon guesses, which may make all the difference to the patient's comfort and to the usefulness of the application.

Blisters act more slowly than mustard, but are more radical in their effects. If the old-fashioned blister is ordered, warm the back of it by holding to the fire or round a can of hot water before applying to the skin, which should first have been thoroughly washed with soap and warm water. It is sometimes recommended that a blister be kept in place by strips of diachylon, or that, if spread on plaster, the edges be pressed down upon the skin; but this causes unnecessary pain when the blister begins to rise, and it is quite as easily kept in position by a handkerchief or bandage, which can be regulated at will. Blistering-fluid is now commonly used in place of the spread blister, and this will probably be applied by the doctor; if not, the nurse must be sure that she understands how much she is to use; and in every case, she should ask the doctor to show her the exact part he wishes covered. Some doctors will mark the skin, so as to show the precise position for the blister or fluid, and this marking must be strictly followed. The time a blister is to remain on will depend upon the amount of work it has to do, which varies considerably; and in this, too, a nurse should be sure that she understands, so as to carry out the doctor's wishes.

When the blister has risen to the desired point, the plaster must be gently removed. This can best be done by taking hold of the edges with both hands and drawing them gently towards the middle. If only a small bladder has been raised, the fluid is sometimes allowed to re-absorb itself, the only treatment being a covering of cotton-wool; but, as a rule, the blister is opened and the contents allowed to run out. To do this, it is only necessary to prick with a sharp needle at the most dependent part. Care must be taken that the serum, or fluid within the blister, does not run over the unaffected skin. A piece of soft, old linen, or cotton-wool, will generally be enough to soak it up; but if very large, it is better to keep a sponge, wrung dry,

out of warm water, at the opening. The loose skin of the blister should be pressed down into place, and as much of the fluid as possible squeezed out. In doing this, use a piece of cotton-wool, and handle with the greatest gentleness.

If the place is to be allowed to heal, it is only necessary to lay over it a piece of lint, spread with some soothing ointment, which should be ready for use before the blister is opened. If the action of the blister is to be kept up, poultices will very likely be ordered, or the whole of the scarf (outer) skin may need to be removed. This is done by cutting round the inner edge of the blister with *sharp* scissors, as near the true skin as possible. But it is not an easy task for an amateur; and a nurse who has never done such a thing, had better tell the doctor so before attempting it, especially if her hands are given to shaking over unaccustomed work. When the skin has been removed, the place will need dressing with whatever stimulating ointment has been ordered. This must be spread to the exact size of the wound on lint, half an inch larger all round. This kind of dressing will probably need changing several times, according to directions; and all handling must be very carefully done. If the lint adheres, it should never be pulled at or dragged; bathing with warm water will generally loosen it; and if not, it had better remain till it comes away of itself. The fresh dressing should also be prepared and ready at hand before the old one is removed; and soiled lint or rag should at once be burnt. These directions apply to the dressing of all wounds which may come under a nurse's notice, and again arises the need for absolute cleanliness, without which many a healthy wound has been made into a foul one, and danger actually created.

Leeches are ordered when it is thought desirable to remove a small amount of blood. They are delicate creatures, and should be handled as little as possible. If to be applied dry, they may be taken out of water and allowed to crawl over a towel. The part to which they are to be put must be thoroughly cleansed with soap and warm water. If this is properly done, there will generally be no difficulty in getting the leech to bite; but should it refuse, the skin may be smeared with a little milk, beer, or sugar and water. If this fails, and indeed in dealing with all flat surfaces, the leech may be applied in water. To do this, fill a wineglass nearly full of water; put in the leech; cover with a piece of writing-paper and invert quickly; draw the paper away; and when the leech has taken hold, remove the glass, sucking up the water with a piece of sponge.

A leech must never be dragged off, or the teeth may remain in the flesh, and cause profuse bleeding. If it does not drop off of its own accord, sprinkle a little salt over its head, and it will quickly give way. The place from which the leech has come can generally be closed by simple pressure with the finger, or by a small pad of wet lint; but occasionally, especially with children, this does not have the desired effect, and the bleeding continues profusely. In such cases, it may be necessary to touch the spot with a stick of caustic; or the edges may be pinched up, well dried, and painted with collodion. If it is wished to continue the bleeding, poultices

or fomentations will be needed, and should be applied as hot as the patient will bear them.

A doctor will generally direct where he wishes leeches applied; but if he gives no instructions, avoid the neighbourhood of a vein, and, if possible, choose a point where a bone will give something to press upon.

Turpentine stupes are used for the relief of extreme internal pain; they are made by sprinkling spirits of turpentine upon flannel previously soaked in very hot water, and then thoroughly rinsed. The turpentine must always be sprinkled, never poured; for unless thus carefully managed, it may raise painful blisters. I have known a patient, suffering terrible internal pain, driven nearly out of his mind by the added misery of badly applied turpentine. But even with care, the skin will sometimes blister, or become violently irritated, and when this extends over a large surface, the patient may complain bitterly of the cure as worse than the cause. In most cases, an application of lint soaked in olive oil will give immediate relief; and where the irritation is not extreme, a layer of medicated wool will be enough.

Stimulating liniments are useful in proportion to the ability and thoroughness with which they are applied. They should be rubbed in with a firm even pressure, but without the misguided vigour which leads to soreness of the skin. Some liniments are so stimulating that no friction is necessary, and in applying such as mercurial or croton oil, the nurse should wear a kid glove and apply with a rag, being careful not to let the liniment come in contact with her own skin; and to make assurance doubly sure, she will do well to thoroughly wash her hands after each application.

Evaporating lotions are sometimes used for reducing the temperature of an inflamed part. They consist of water to which a certain amount of spirit has been added. A good proportion is, one part of spirits of wine to eight of cold water. A homely substitute for spirits of wine is ordinary gin, which answers the purpose very well. A single fold of lint, or linen, should be thoroughly soaked in the lotion, and laid on the part, which must, if possible, be freely exposed to the air, and the lint kept constantly wet, without being removed. Such applications must never be used when the skin is broken, or even cracked. Plain cold water is only admissible then; but the effect of the water will be greater if it has the addition of a lump of ice.

Ice is sometimes ordered as an internal remedy, for the relief of thirst, sickness, or hæmorrhage. It should be given the patient in small lumps, which can easily be broken off as wanted by tapping on a needle with a thimble finger. This not only saves the trouble and noise of hammering, but has the additional advantage of economy. Ice to the head is not easily managed by the inexperienced. The best way is to fill a bladder or ordinary sponge-bag half full of ice, broken into small pieces. If the patient is quiet, the bag may be moulded to the shape of the head, and kept in place by tapes attached to the head of the bed, or by being fastened to the pillow with safety-pins. If the patient is restless, take a piece of calico eight or nine inches wide, tear the ends in half to within fourteen inches of

the middle; place the broad untorn part over the ice-bag on the top of the head; draw the back ends forward, and fasten under the chin. Take the front ends, draw them so as to cross at the back of the neck, and carry forward to the forehead, fastening with a safety-pin. These directions sound rather formidable; but it is really a simple matter, and will be less fatiguing to the nurse than a method sometimes adopted, and which consists in placing a piece of ice in a cup-shaped sponge and passing it constantly over the patient's head.

Ice can be kept very well, even in summer, by being wrapped in coarse flannel, so arranged as to allow the drippings to run off. To keep a small quantity in the sickroom, put a piece of coarse flannel over a basin or glass and lay the ice on it. If the flannel is not coarse enough for the melting ice to run through easily, a few small holes may be made, and it is surprising how much longer will be the melting process, than if the ice were simply left in a cup or glass.

It is necessary in using ice to the head or to a joint, to understand that as soon as it has melted its value is gone, and it should be immediately replaced. The ice-water remaining, though cold to the touch, is of a higher temperature than ice itself, and very rapidly indeed increases in warmth. This is a point that requires stress laid upon it, as ice is only ordered in severe cases, and to do good, the action needs to be constantly kept up.

Inhalation is a method of bringing remedies into actual contact with the air-passages by means of steam. Sometimes plain water only is used, but more often some drug is added just before using. If an inhaler is at hand, the only precautions needed are, to be particular that the water is at exactly the prescribed temperature, and that it only half fills the inhaler. A good substitute for an inhaler can be made by covering a jug of hot water with a thick towel, so arranged as to leave only just room for the patient's mouth. A good many people make as much fuss over inhaling as over taking a pill, and with about equal reason, the mistake in both cases arising from false ideas as to the necessity for exertion; and a nurse should instruct her patient to breathe naturally, slowly, and without effort. After five or six inhalations, which should occupy about a minute, it is well to stop, and take one or two breaths in the ordinary way, so as not to continue inhaling uninterruptedly, which is likely to produce a sensation of faintness.

'MOONLIGHTING.'

AN AUSTRALIAN SKETCH.

JUST a word of explanation to my English readers, before commencing to narrate what would otherwise perhaps prove rather perplexing to some of them. Extending for many miles backwards from the banks of the Barwon and the Darling are vast scrubs, in which a few years ago were situated the haunts of thousands of wild cattle or 'scrubbers.' When the country in that direction was first settled, odd cattle strayed away into the bush. In course of time these bred, and were continually being joined by other strays,

till at length the settlers found it well worth their while to have periodical gatherings and brandings. By daylight, it would have been hopeless to attempt to get stock out of the dense scrubs, in some parts of which the sun hardly ever shone, and through which neither man nor horse could penetrate. The only way, then, was to watch by moonlight till the cattle came out of the forest, as they were in the habit of doing every night, to feed in the open country; then, having ready a mob of tame cattle or 'coaches,' rush between the 'scrubbers' and their retreat, and once 'boxed,' or mixed up with the 'coaches,' there was never much difficulty in taking the lot to the stockyard. It was a game that required the most fearless riding, with plenty of pluck, and the best horseflesh obtainable. In those days, and even now in some parts, to hold the reputation of being a first-class scrub-rider is still the summit of the native-born Australian stockman's ambition. But as fencing increases, moonlighting is almost, except in the far-out scrubs of the 'Never-never' country, abandoned, most of the wild cattle having been got in as settlement extended year by year.

We started from Eulaloo, a lately taken-up block of country, containing about two thousand square miles, late one summer's evening, about twenty strong, to muster a dense forest, some twenty miles from headquarters, and known as the Point Danger Scrub, each man on the best stock-horse he could beg, borrow, or 'shake;' for stockmen were not wont to be too particular 'out back,' and would unhesitatingly take the loan of a neighbour's horse for an expedition like the present one, if their own happened to be knocked-up or sore-backed. We were a rather mixed lot, white, black, and half-a-dozen different shades of yellow, these last varying in colour from that of an old saddle to the lighter tint of a ripe lemon, but for all that first-rate horsemen—in the open; funky, as a rule, in the scrub. Five or six black fellows, with old 'Wallaby' as their 'boss,' brought up the rear, driving before them three hundred head of quiet cows and bullocks, to act as 'coaches' to their wild brethren of the scrubs. Each member of the party carried a blanket or a greatcoat strapped in front of him; as also a quart-pot and a pouch containing 'damper,' tea, and sugar, slung to the saddle. Beef there was none—we were going to find that. Two or three of the men had short rifles at their backs, for the purpose of 'potting' any old scrub bull which might turn 'rusty' and charge, as they often do. Although both the owner of the run and his super were amongst the mob, recognised leader there was none, for in moonlighting, the best men invariably go to the front and lead the rest, with whom it is optional whether they follow or not; but a spirit of emulation, and perhaps, above all, the fear of the unmerciful chaffing which falls to the share of the skulker, generally induces every one to do his best.

Our course for the first four or five miles lay along the river-flats, where the long rank grass reached over our knee-pads, and the giant coolibars grew thick and high in the soft loamy soil. Soon the moon rose above the wooded horizon, throwing a weird light over the party as it wound silently along, and casting enormous fantastic shadows amongst the white trunks of the swamp gums and oaks that fringe the river, which we could hear rippling over its bed full forty feet below us.

Insensibly, I fell to thinking of another band which, twenty long years before, had travelled the same track, bound for the far-distant Northern Sea, and whose names are, and ever will be, as household words in our mouths. I saw again in my mind's eye the string of horses and camels winding slowly along—soldierly Burke and faithful Wills, with Gray and King—all, except the last, to find their graves in the silent, hopeless wilderness. My reverie was interrupted by the scraping across my nose of a branch, as we left the river and struck off into the bush, which was thick enough just here to keep us perpetually ducking, to escape straggling limbs, and inquisitive shrubs of the 'wait-a-bit' order. After about a three hours' ride, we halted on the edge of a broad plain, here over a mile wide, lit our pipes, and waited for old Wallaby, who with the 'coaches' soon came up at a trot. On the opposite side of the plain to where we stood, jutted out, dark and sombre, Point Danger, so named because, a few years before the period of my story, four travellers had there been speared by the blacks. It was simply a long, thick clump of great belars, stretching out into the open from the main body of scrub, which extended its broken outlines east and west as far as the eye could reach.

We now left the 'coaches' feeding quietly along the edge of the yarrans which we had just passed through, and as a loud bellowing from the belars told us it was feeding-time, we moved towards the bottom end of the plain so as to get a fair start. In a few minutes, from all parts of the big scrub, appeared apparently endless strings of cattle deploying on to the plain—all colours, sizes, and ages, from the fierce-looking old warrior of the scrubs down to calves of a few days' old. We had the wind, and as yet they suspected nothing. Minute after minute passed, and still they came, till we, having hard work to hold in our impatient horses, longed for the signal to be off. At length the last one seemed to have come out. But we had waited too long. A wary old scrubber had been, for the last minute or two, snorting, pawing the ground, and muttering hoarsely to himself, and now, with a tremendous bellow, signifying that he knew what was in the wind, he began to beat a retreat, followed by the whole mob.

'Now, boys, at 'em!' And away we went. The pace was a real cracker and no mistake; and over such ground too! Riddled with 'melon-holes' from eight inches to two feet deep, and covered with dead myall trees, poking up nasty snaggy branches out of the long grass, it was a wonder every horse in the mob wasn't staked. But born and bred on a cattle-camp, and broken-in to this kind of work, the noble animals seemed to the full as excited as their

riders, and fairly flew over the dangerous ground. The head of the cattle had in the meantime galloped into the scrub; our task was to turn them back if possible; and I must own that my heart sank towards my boots for a minute, as, in company with half-a-dozen others, I found myself tearing madly over logs and holes towards the apparently impenetrable barrier of great trunks, branches, and underwood that loomed black and forbidding before us, and through which we could hear the beasts crashing. It was not my first moonlighting experience by many times, but it was the first in such thick country as this, and there was some excuse for feeling a bit nervous. I had been told to 'leave it all to your horse, only look out for your head;' but although confiding in this advice to a certain extent, I did not go so far as to imagine it capable of taking me clear through such a barricade as the one now fronting me. However, at it we went, Colonel Percy riding gallantly in his long stirrups, as if at the head of his regiment, charging gray-coated Russians or dusky Pandies. Slap, dash, crash, and we were into it, crouching low on our horses' necks, and for my own part, astonished still to find my brains in their proper place.

It was truly wonderful, how, going at top-speed in a place that many horsemen would not walk through by daylight, the stock-horses wound round trunks and underneath overhanging limbs, now grazing your near knee-pad against the bark, now tearing the off side-sleeve out of your coat, but nothing worse. To pull your horse, if you were fool enough to try, was, if lucky, only a broken limb; if the reverse, to leave your brains on the nearest tree. Such a cracking, crashing, bellowing, and yelling, it had not been my lot to hear for many a day, as horses and men strained every nerve to head the excited cattle, which, with the semi-darkness of the scrub in their favour, split in all directions, so that at last we had to make our way as well as we could out on to the plain, where the darkies had got only about four hundred head of the tail, rounded up with the coaches. This was poor work, for there must have been over two thousand head on the plain altogether.

As horseman after horseman emerged from the scrub and gathered together, a consultation was held, in which it was decided to send home the mob we had with three of the black fellows and some of the coaches, then have a spell and a 'feed,' and try our luck once more lower down the scrub. First shooting and bleeding a young cow, we cut the rest off, and gave the darkies a start homewards. Fortunately, water was handy in one of the melon-holes before referred to, and soon the horses were unsaddled, backs washed, and hobbled out for an hour or two, to pick the sweet blue-grass of the black-soil plains. Fires of myall wood were now lit, quart-pots placed thereon, and hot coals raked out, upon which presently were spread great slices of the freshly killed meat. A feed too Abyssinian to suit a great many people, perhaps; but if they had lived 'out back' in Australia, for sometimes months, on but little else than mutton, or beef, and pig-weed, they would not be apt to be too particular. Hunger is a wonderful leveller; and Colonel Percy, refined gentleman as he was, attacked his

half-raw, cinder-covered, smoking steak with as much alacrity as the poorest black fellow on his run could have done.

Not much was said till after supper, midnight tiffin, or whatever else you could call it. But as the last chunk of meat and damper disappeared and pipes were lit all round, a general overhaul took place. Some of us had come off lightly enough; others were scratched and bruised, and had scarcely a stitch of clothing left on them—a state of things they seemed to regard with pride as a proof of prowess, bantering their more fortunate but less denuded mates. The super, who had lost his hat, coat, and one of his riding-boots, came in for his share of chaff; as also did the colonel, on account of his long stirrups.

'Not but what you rides well for a new-chum [the colonel was his employer, and had lately come out from England and taken up the run]—very well; but you'll have to shorten them stirrup-leathers five or six holes, or else you're bound to get a buster one o' these days.' This was 'Slim Jim,' the colonel's head-stockman, who went on: 'Our country 'orses ain't used to have a man set down in the saddle like a lump o' lead, as I seen most new-chums do. It looks well maybe, upright, an' all that, but it ain't well. When I see a man all over the saddle, 'ands well down, an' knees well up, but close in, mind ye, then I says: "There's a chap as can stick a buck, or a dozen if need be."'

'Well, Jim,' replied Colonel Percy good-humouredly, whilst pulling leisurely at his brier-root, 'I like my own way best yet. I've always been accustomed to it, and never knew it to fail me so far, although moonlighting certainly does require a man to be, as you say, "all over his saddle." But it's not bad fun, for all that.'

'Right enough for the young fellows, colonel—their bones knit quickly,' put in quiet Mr Turnbull, the super; 'but rather too warm for men getting on in years like us.'

'Not a bit, sir—not a bit of it,' returned the colonel, tugging at his long gray moustache. 'Gad, sir, that spin to-night was the first one I've had for many a long day, and it did me good, I can assure you—hope we'll have another one directly.'

Our attention was now drawn to a dispute between one of our stockmen and a little Irishman. The latter was saying vehemently to the stockman—a young six-foot 'Cornstalk' (or native of New South Wales), who lay full length on the grass, with his head on his saddle, smiling at his excited mate, who stood over him: 'Me not able to ride! Listen to that, boys! Bad luck to ye, what d'ye mane at all?'

'Now, Mickey,' answered the other, 'don't get on yer tail. Yer knows as well's I do yer can't ride, an' what's more, ye'll never learn now. Why, ye've got no 'ands on a 'orse, no more'n a gohanner.'

Mick was, as some one remarked, 'just jumping' at this last remark, which was clinched by another of the men saying: 'Sit down, Mickey. What's the use o' blowing? Didn't I see old "Nutmeg," what the boss's little kiddy rides, chuck yer clean over his head this very night, when yer was tryin' to pull him away from the scrub!'

Shouts of laughter hailed this last sally; for poor Mick, who really was no horseman, was

rather given to boasting of his exploits after expeditions like these.

Another start was now made for a place three miles away, called 'Jack Smith's Lookout.' Why, I know not. The lookout was an immense tree, belonging to that species of eucalyptus known as 'apple-tree' by bushmen in all parts of the colony, and standing quite alone in the middle of an open space, rather smaller than the scene of our first exploits, and which was known as the Basin.

The moon was still riding high in the heavens, as we cautiously came down against the wind, and were delighted to see the plain covered with cattle; so thick, indeed, they seemed, that the 'Lookout' appeared to be growing out of their close, steadily feeding ranks. There must have been at least twelve or fourteen hundred head, amongst which we recognised many who had before given us the slip.

'Now, kernel!' whispered Slim Jim, 'we got 'em. See! the coaches is boxed a'ready.' And Jim was right, but not till after some hard galloping. About five hundred head got into the scrub; but we met them and drove them back on to the plain, and just at this time an accident happened. Colonel Percy, mounted on an old stock-horse, had galloped to head a roan bullock, which was making back. Seeing the colonel was gaining on him, the beast suddenly dodged short; the colonel's horse, as in duty bound, followed suit; but his unfortunate rider was not 'in it,' and flew over old 'Ratapan's' head, much to that good steed's disgust.

'Ah!' said Jim, as we pulled the old gentleman's arm in again, and bandaged the bark splints with a torn shirt, 'that comes o' long stirrups!'

Our intention had been to have stayed out another night; but now we mustered up our captives and started to drive them stationwards.

Imagine the great Australian moon, beginning to grow a little pale now, shining down through the trees on a tossing sea of horned heads, bellowing with rage, crashing and trampling through the thick underwood; then on a sandy patch raising clouds of dust, through which darted hither and thither wild-looking horsemen, waking the parrots and kookaburras from their morning sleep with the incessant pistol-like cracks of their stock-whips, whilst kangaroos and wallabies leapt, thud, thud, through the scrub.

The colonel had been advised to take a black boy and get home as fast as he could; but he insisted on staying with us, saying his arm, which was only dislocated, was quite comfortable. So the noisy procession passed on through the early morning, over myall plains and belts of pines, through yarran clumps and along the river-flats once more, till at last, just as the fierce, red-looking December sun came peeping over the bald hill at the back of Eulaloo, the great slip-rails were taken down, and the cattle—by this time a little quietened—ushered into the yard amongst their fellow-prisoners, there to await drafting and branding, whilst all hands retired for a well-earned bath and sleep.

So ended one moonlight expedition. But such hauls as we made that night are rare indeed now; and I have known the stockmen after being out for four or five nights to return without a solitary hoof.

Point Danger scrub is long ago fenced off; and in place of the loud bellow of the old scrubber, is now heard the thump, thump of the splitter's maul and wedges.

PUBLIC AMBULANCE CARRIAGES.

An admirable plan has been originated in America, and is now sought to be introduced into Paris, which is to establish at stated points means of communication with the great hospitals, somewhat in the same way that 'fire-alarms' are now given in London by means of posts fixed about the streets. These, of course, would be worked by telegraph, and would take the form of pillars painted red, kept locked, the key at the nearest shop. An ambulance car and horse would always be kept at the hospitals in readiness, so as to be able to start for the spot indicated by the alarm in the short space of forty-two seconds—at least that is the estimate. On receipt of the 'call,' if the accident is very urgent, the ambulance will start from the hospital which has received the alarm, carrying a surgeon with it, who will immediately attend to the injured person, place him in the conveyance, and drive off with all possible speed to the hospital. This is indeed putting the telegraph to the highest and most humane of uses; and if brought into general operation, it is possible that it may, with the help of the ambulance, be the means of saving much suffering and many lives. It is very well known that many a life has been lost for want of a little ready and timely assistance at a critical moment; but such help having been delayed, when it has at last reached the sufferer, has then been too late—the life has fled.

AN INVOCATION.

O wind, snell wind of the North!

Whence cometh thy shroud of snow?
Hath touch of thine quickened the sleeping earth,
Hastened the pangs of the young Spring's birth,
Wakened the life below?

O wind, soft wind of the South!

Come, scatter thy treasures now—
Whispering songs from a siren's mouth,
Moistening dews for the parched earth's drouth,
Buds for the bending bough.

O wind, chill wind of the East!

A roisterer from afar;
Dripping and dank from Neptune's feast,
Thou comest, and lo! white waves, like yeast,
Foam o'er the harbour bar.

O wind, warm wind of the West!

Joy of the summer-tide hours!
Comest thou hither at love's behest,
To woo with a smile the glad earth's breast,
Sweet with the scent of flowers?

O winds, four winds of heaven!

Sweep earth's Æolian strings,
And bear, from regions beyond our ken,
To the hearts of suffering sons of men,
Bright healing on your wings!

W. C. HOWDEN.

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